The MEDICAL MISSIONARY

A Life Well Lived in Tibet

Vol. VII NOVEMBER, 1933 No. 2

The MEDICAL MISSIONARY

Published with ecclesiastical approbation ten times a year by the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, Inc., Brookland, Washington, D. C., in the interest of Medical Missions and Women of the Orient. Subscription, $1 per year.
Editor: Sr. M. Elizabeth. Telephone: Decatur 2687

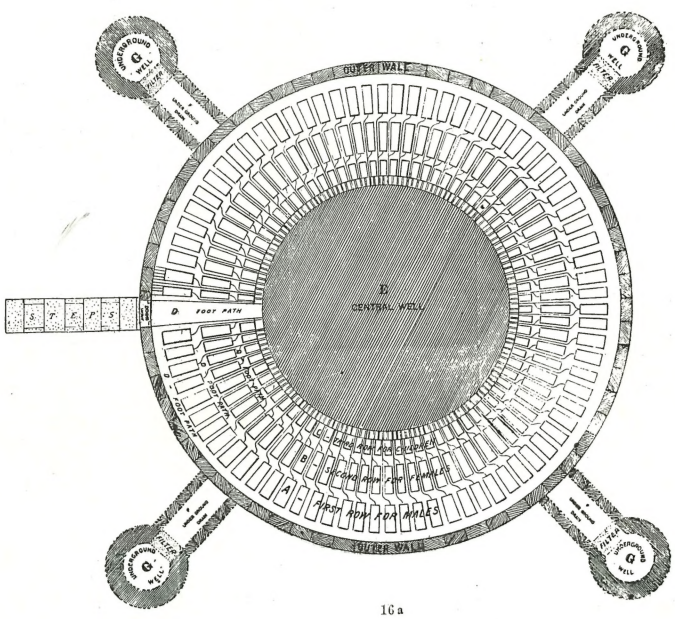
"Entered as second-class matter September 11, 1928, at the post office at Washington, D. C., under the Act of March 3, 1879."

TOWERS OF SILENCE

By SISTER M. PAUL, *R. N.*

FOR three thousand years the Parsees have been faithful to many of their commandments and ancient customs. Foremost among these is the disposal of the dead in the Towers of Silence.

The Tower of Silence is the outgrowth of the Parsee belief that while all respect must be paid to the dead, there must be no chance of their contaminating the living and even "Mother Earth shall not be defiled." With this idea in view, the moment a man's life is given up as lost, preparations are made for the disposal of his body by two people trained in this work. The house and place where the body is to rest before removal to the tower, is washed and the shroud also is washed. Then, when the man is on the point of death, two priests are sent for. They recite the *"Patet,"*—the prayer of repentance for one's sins. After his death the shroud and *"Kusli"* or sacred thread are girdled around the body. The deceased is then placed on a clean white sheet and laid in the room prepared for it. It is considered unsafe to touch the body for, as it now begins to decompose, the touch may spread disease among the living. A circle is drawn around the body at a distance of three feet from it and no one may approach beyond this line.



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PLAN OF A TOWER OF SILENCE

During my stop-over in Bombay, I had the opportunity of seeing these far-famed towers situated high on the top of Malabar Hill. There, there are five towers, three reserved for public use, a fourth for criminals and suicides and the fifth, the oldest, which was erected in 1672 by Modi Hizi Wachba, one of the earliest of the Parsee settlers, is now used exclusively for his descendants. They are surrounded by a beautifully kept garden, which might have appeared to be a public park except for the fact that perched all about on the trees were gruesome black vultures, waiting and watching. It gave one an eery feeling to see those great creatures biding their time until the next admittance into the Tower of Silence furnished them with their human prey.

This may take place (that is, the corpse may be removed there) at any time during the day, but it is strictly forbidden to transport it at night. All who follow the bier to the tower must wear white and march in pairs. When the gate of the tower is reached the great iron lock by which the gate is always kept closed, is opened. Then the body is brought inside, placed on a stone slab and the clothes removed. It is left thus that the vultures may devour it more easily and quickly, thereby lessening the chance of further decomposition and insuring greater safety from infection. They say that within an hour or two, the corpse is completely stripped of its flesh by the birds.

The Towers of Silence are wherever possible built on the top of a hill. They are not always of the same dimensions, some being smaller than in the above illustration. No expense is spared

(*Continued on page* 8)

WASHINGTON

October 1 marked the opening meeting of the Washington Auxiliary of the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries. It was a beautiful afternoon and the attendance, numbering about sixty, was unusually large and enthusiastic for so early in the season. Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament at which the Rev. Walter R. Marks, C.S.C., officiated and Brother Bertrand, C.S.C., assisted, closed the meeting.

The Society is exceedingly grateful to Mrs. E. Reinoehl, the president of the Auxiliary, to the committee, and the members for attending this meeting and for their generous contributions of provisions. It also wishes to thank the members who were unable to attend for sending substantial tokens of their good will.

A FRIEND IN NEED

In September when the wallet was heavy with coppers and we began to think that the saying "save the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves," didn't apply to us, for there were no dollars; we made an appeal to our good friends the clergy. We were grateful to all who were able to help us but in particular to the Rev. John R. O'Connor, pastor, Church of Our Lady, Star of the Sea, Cape May, N. J., for his most gracious generosity. He wrote:

"You will be pleased to know that I made an announcement of your good work and an appeal to help you in your praiseworthy work. The response is evidenced in the check I gladly mail to you—$50."

SHE IS GREETING DR. DENGEL WITH A "SALAAM"!

DACCA

Sister Helen writes from Dacca: "Dr. Dengel and I did village work for about three weeks in Ansia, a hill village about ten miles from Murree. We stayed with a Mussulman family and fixed up one room as a dispensary. There is no medical aid available for women between Murree and Kohala, a distance of about twenty-seven miles, so our dispensary was well attended. Women and children came from all the villages around us, sometimes walking six or seven miles. We had an average of one hundred to a hundred and fifty patients daily from 7 a. m. until about 1 p. m. In the afternoon we usually went about visiting in the village. The people seemed very grateful and begged Dr. Dengel to stay there and build a hospital. Building a hospital and setting up a temporary dispensary are two quite different matters. About ninety-five per cent of the people are extremely poor. Most of the families live in one-room mud huts and their diet consists chiefly of corn bread made without yeast and of vegetable curry. About seventy-five per cent of the women have pyorrhoea so you can imagine the state of their general health. The usual complaint was 'pains all over.' Certainly these hill villages would present a good field for public health work, but if we were to build a hospital there, we could expect little financial aid from the people."

RAWALPINDI

In Sister Paul's last letter, dated September 14, she writes: "The hospital is going to be grand. The piazza around the second floor is a great addition. On the north side one looks towards Murree and the mountains are so restful. I'm sure the patients will all want to be out on it.

"The nurses have had their vacations and are back. They are marking time cutting and folding hems on sheets and Sister Margaret is going to give them some classes as nothing can be done while they are repairing the hospital. They work in the doctor's house and are having a grand time. They are all good girls.

"One of them caused a little excitement. She confided to the chaplain that there were no Catholic boys around and her mother was anxious for her to be married. Father said that he knew a nice Catholic boy who was working in the P. O. at Kashmir and his name was X——. Well, within a week, X——'s sister arrived and made the offering of X——., but as X—— was only nineteen years, the nurse said, 'No, he is too young!' She kindly told the sister that there were other nurses who wanted a husband, but the sister refused to listen. That wouldn't have been so bad but in another day or two a letter came addressed to the 'Doctor in Charge,' with a big cross on it, stating that the writer understood we had a

certain nurse who was unengaged, and that he would like to offer himself to her in marriage. The letter recounted all the schools he had attended, how much land he had and that he was twenty-three, a born Catholic and that he hoped to get a prompt and satisfactory reply. (I wish I had the original!) He signed it 'Most obediently yours in Christ, F. P.' Well, Doctor broke the news to the nurse. I didn't see her, but I suppose she stuck the end of her sari in her mouth and laughed. She went home a few days later to tell her father, but when she returned, nothing further developed. I'll let you know because things seem a little favorable for F. P.

"Who said India was hot? I haven't been uncomfortable yet, although they say I missed the heat wave in June when I was in Murree. Never mind, it will be nice and *cool* before long!"

THOSE DIVERTING TRAIN TRIPS

When Dr. Dengel went to Assam, recently, she met a little Hindu lady on the train. At first, the latter was quite shy and afraid to talk; but after a while she warmed up and before her destination was reached even opened her trunk and showed off her beautiful, expensive *saris,* of which she seemed to have dozens. As she was wearing glasses, Dr. Dengel sympathetically inquired if her sight was bad. "Oh no, it is very good!" was the unexpected reply, "You see they are only plain glass, but as glasses are very fashionable at present, I wear them. Then too, the frames are of gold and it is another way of wearing jewelry."

When Sister Helen went to Mymensingh, about a five hours' trip from Dacca, to help in the fight of saving the life of a very good Christian woman, unfortunately she arrived too late. The poor husband was left with two little children and a very small baby. As he was coming to Dacca, he asked Sister Helen to help take the family. They reached the station just about in time for the train to leave, but the station-master very kindly held up the train in order that they might get settled. They then discovered that there was no milk for the baby. The father begged that the train might be delayed a few more minutes while he went out to buy some. In a few minutes he returned and as he was hurrying along the station platform, the station-master asked if the baby had to be fed then. "Oh, yes," he said, and after having had the engine driver heat the milk on his nice big fire, he gave it to Sister Helen. Sister, who had the baby in her arms, took the milk and stowing it away in a safe place waited for the train to start. (Not a bit of it!) After some minutes the engine-driver came along to enquire if the baby had finished the milk so that he could start the train. Sister had had no idea of feeding it, but as everyone seemed so anxious that it should not starve to death (the baby had had a large bottle of milk before leaving the house) she gave it a few sips. As soon as the meal was finished, the train started for Dacca.

M. L.

THE NATIONAL MISSIONARY CONGRESS OF LYON

A great national missionary congress will be held at Lyons, France, on December 4 to 7, 1933. Its general subject of study is "The Pagan Woman and Christianity."

Each day there will be celebrated a Pontifical High Mass, different Cardinals officiating and on December 7 will be celebrated the closing Mass in the Basilica of Fourvière, Mgr. Boucher, Protonotary Apostolic and president of the Central Council of the Propagation of the Faith, officiating.

PROGRAM

December 4.—"The Liberation of the Pagan Woman by Christianity and its spiritual significance," by Mgr. Bruno de Solages, Rector of the Catholic Faculty of Toulouse.

December 5.—Mgr. Beaupin will study the situation of the pagan woman.

Mother Mary, of the Missions of the Missionary Catechists of Mary Immaculate, will talk on the actual state of women in India.

M. Georges Goyau, of the Académie Française, will hold a conference on what Christianity has done for the liberation of the pagan woman.

December 6.—Father Gilcher, Provincial of the African Missions of Lyons, will speak on the pagan woman in Africa; Father Dubernet, of the White Fathers, will speak on "The Pagan Woman and the European Government."

On the last day Père Dubois, S.J., will speak on the "Penetration of Christianity Among Pagan Women," and in the evening at the Church of Saint Nizier, Canon Thellier, of Poncheville, will preach on the "New Conditions of the Missionary Apostolate."

During the course of the Congress some special meetings will be devoted to the means of developing the pontifical works and of diffusing missionary ideas.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please notify us of change of address. The Post Office charges us every time it notifies us. Your co-operation in this matter will be appreciated.

The Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries is a religious community founded for the purpose of bringing medical aid to the foreign mission field. Please address enquiries to: Dr. Anna Dengel, Catholic Medical Mission House, Brookland, Washington, D. C.

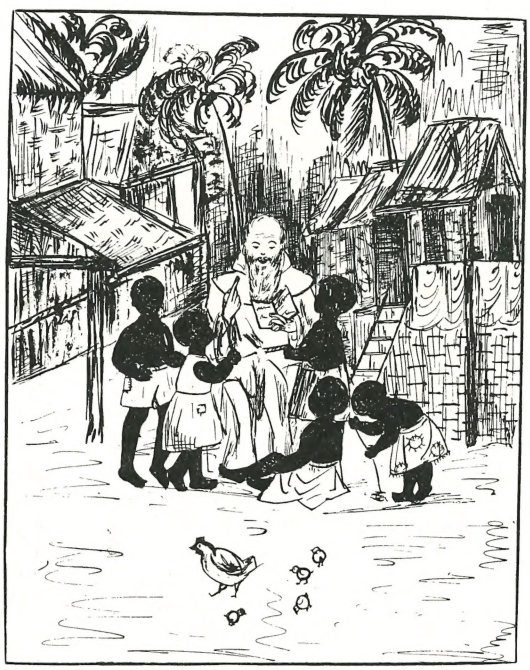
European Subscription: 5/ a year. English Address: Mater Christi House, Thornbury Road, Osterley, Middlesex, England.

THE WORLD THE FILIPINO WOMAN MOVES IN

By KATHERINE KIDNAY

IN MEASURING the civilization of a nation in the world today, the test most often applied, is the position of its women in social, civic, and political life. Japan, Russia, China, and even India are entering upon a new era because of the emancipation of women in these countries. To the student of sociology and education, it is interesting to turn from these countries to the Filipinos, the one Catholic nation of the East, and to find there an Oriental woman who for independence of character and self-sufficiency is the equal of any produced by Western civilization.

To understand Filipino civilization, it must be viewed against its historical background. In the early days, the gentle holy old friar gathered his children around him and taught them in their own tongue the love of God. Think, for a moment, of the difficulty of the task. There are in use in these islands more than seventy different languages, yet Spain, who governed the Philippines from 1529 until 1900, left them 95 per cent Catholic. The national dress, the games, the practices of devotion and piety are all proof of the educational genius of the old Spaniards.



THE GENTLE, HOLY OLD FRIAR GATHERED HIS CHILDREN AROUND HIM

It is true that Filipino civilization appears primitive to us. As the report of the Catholic Center Party explains it: "Our civilization being eminently Catholic and accommodated to our especial idiosyncracy, possesses characters little visible, very modest and better suited to demonstrate a social, moral, and interior progress, than a material and industrial civilization."

A few fundamental principles strongly emphasized in the teaching of the old Spanish friars have made it a nation of homes rather than of states and municipalities, and this is the secret of the power of the Filipino woman. Why a club for her when she is already the president of a very active organization consisting of a husband and a dozen or so of children, with perhaps, a few young and old relatives thrown in. Over these she presides with unselfish devotion. We do not hear of her activities as an agitator because she is so sure of her privileges that she does not have to stand on her rights.

Education under the Spaniards was of a benevolent patriarchal type. Each village had its school, supervised by the friar and taught by the best teachers he could procure. There were good schools in the larger towns as early as 1540 and the date given for the foundation of the Santa Tamas University at Manila is 1611. These colleges were for men only but there were many fine schools for girls, taught by Spanish, French, and German missionary sisters and many barrio (village) schools taught by native nuns. The Spanish language was not spoken in many of these schools, though at various times the King of Spain did try to have it taught. Since the United States has occupied these Islands the American Public School is supposed to supplant all others and the English language to be taught in all schools. However, on account of the inability of the Philippine Legislature to levy taxes sufficient to pay the salaries demanded by American teachers, many of the towns are without schools and the report of the Director of Education to the Department of Insular Affairs at Washington, D. C., for 1927 (page 86), gives 65 per cent of the children not attending any school and 162 elementary schools closed with 46,858 children refused admission when school opened in June. The report also states that of 34,285 children attending high school 59.7 per cent pay tuition ranging from $2 to $12.50 per year. The reason given for the closing of these schools is that the English language is not correctly taught in them. The astounding fact that there are in these islands about 2,000,000 Catholic children growing up without any education at all is not grasped by the Catholics of the United States who as they form a third of the voting power are to some extent responsible for the situation.

The general health condition in the Islands has been much improved since the American occupation, by the introduction of artesian wells and a

stricter enforcement of quarantine rules. The diseases which mostly afflict the Filipinos are cholera, typhoid, malaria, beri-beri, and a form of dysentery.

Cholera has been much more readily brought under control during the last outbreak by the strenuous efforts of Gov. General Wood, who was himself an army doctor in his youth and whose wisdom and experience did much for the health of the Philippines. Beri-beri has been greatly reduced by the encouragement given to the people to eat a greater variety of foods and to use unpolished rice.

The lepers who are quarantined on Culion Island have ceased to be the menace they formerly were. Gov. Wood predicted that of the 5,000 cases under care, all but the very advanced would yield to the treatment of ethyl esters, a drug distilled from Chulmoogra oil and first used in Molokai, the leper colony of the Hawaiian Islands.

The nipa hut of the Filipino shelters more joy than many a brown stone front. Here, family life is not a duty but the chief joy of existence. The root lies away back in the psychology of the Filipino mind. He is not less intelligent than we. He is different. We may despise him as less physically strong but is not his resistance to disease to which we succumb, a very real kind of strength? Nature has favored the Philippines. The gentleness of her sway has made the Filipino take many things for granted. He does not struggle against his environment. By patient teaching, he has grasped the principles of self-restraint contained in the doctrines of Christianity. It is a self-imposed temperance which strengthens the will and lifts him to the equality of other civilized nations. The American objects that he is lazy. He is, but we know that in the history of the race, culture began with leisure so why blame the Filipino because he has had more of this than we of a sterner clime.

The occupation of most Filipinos is agriculture, but the stress of economic pressure is forcing them into other occupations. The principal exports are hemp (of which they produce the best in the world), tobacco, sugar, cocoanuts, straw hats, and embroidery. With the American occupation has come the demand for rubber, and many groves have been planted in Mindanao by Americans. The Filipino woman exports her embroidery to the United States, and as there are no tariff restrictions, she reaps a fair profit.

Whether the enlarged economic horizon is better for the Filipino woman, only time can prove. American products were not necessary to her happiness in the old days, but would she be content always to sit at the crossroad of the world's trade routes, living on a little rice and fish and desiring nothing more? "Not in bread alone doth man live" is more true of women than of men and she might have been content but the tide of empires has rolled over the quiet waters of the south seas and an economic typhoon is on.

Will the women of the Philippines be able to hold what is best of their beautiful, simple home life and yet rise to an appreciation of all that science and industry of the United States is bringing to their doors? We believe that with the help which they have a right to expect from their Catholic Sisters in the U. S. they will be able to do so. But what chance has the Filipino mother to hold her children secure in the Faith without priests or schools? The present situation is not a permanent thing, it is a crisis which will pass in a few years, but in those few years, a generation of school children will have passed to manhood and womanhood, learning a new language and a new philosophy. American Catholic mothers ask yourselves whether this can be done without the loss of Faith. Some way must be found to reach them with the fundamentals of Catholicity in the English language, at once. Normal schools for the training of native lay teachers as well as nuns would be one way of solving the problem.

TO OUR ENGLISH, SCOTCH AND IRISH READERS

We are looking forward now to the United Catholic Charities Bazaar, Kensington Town Hall, which will be held on the 22nd and 23rd of November. As we have our stall at the Bazaar, we should be very grateful if our English, Scotch, and Irish readers would help us by sending some little gifts to be sold. Our friends on this side of the Atlantic are still very few and far between, and we earnestly hope that they will not be backward in coming to our aid.

A book entitled: "Franciscan Schools of the Custody of the Holy Land Together with other Franciscan Schools in the Near East" has just come into our hands. Besides giving a brief history of the Franciscan custody of the Holy Land, mentioning one of the first hospitals in existence, that of the Franciscans in Jerusalem in 1352, it tells the reader a beautifully illustrated story of the Franciscan educational activities today in all the places in the Holy Land sacred to the memory of Our Lord. To so many of us the Holy Land was a place flourishing in the time of Christ, but today merely another haven for sightseers, that pictures of a present-day generation growing up in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Tiberias, Cana (and all the old familiar names we have grown up with), stirs one with new interest. Throughout one is impressed with the wonderful work done by the Franciscan Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters for so many years in the Holy Land and in the Near East.

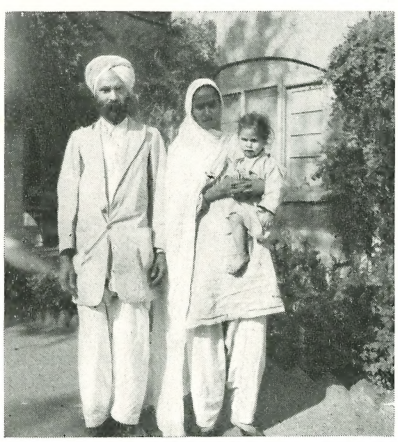
THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

By SISTER M. LAETITIA, *R. N.*

(*Continued*)

MY GUIDE optimistically replied that the little bobs of cotton suspended from the ceiling were to catch the dust and save the ceiling from discoloration. He then showed me some weapons which, he said, the old prophets and their followers used when it was absolutely necessary for them to go to war to right a wrong. The arrow-heads were of gold, the idea being that, "we are all brothers and sorry to kill and wound each other; but as it is necessary, if you are a poor man, the arrow with which you are killed will pay for your funeral and if you are wounded it will pay for your treatment and doctor." Could one imagine anything more idealistic? The arrows that neither killed nor wounded anyone must have been a nice *backshish* (gift).

On one of the walls, I saw a picture of a town being besieged. The food and water was exhausted and the people were dying of starvation. Forty of the defenders decided to make terms with the besiegers when out sallied a woman on a horse leading some more women. They started to fight the enemy and at the same time chided the forty for their cowardice. In the end the women won the battle and the Prophet came out to the field with the names of the disgraced forty written on a slip of paper. He found that they had all been killed but one, who was mortally wounded. He implored the Prophet to tear up the list that their names might not be a bye word among the Sikhs. As the Prophet did this the man fell back on the field, dead.



A SIKH FAMILY

Then I went outside the Temple and there behind it was a tank named Kaul Sur. It was named after a Mahommedan girl who lived long ago. Her parents wished her to marry a very wicked man on account of his riches and the high social standing of his family. This, she refused to do. She fled to the Sikhs for help as they may refuse help to no one who appeals to them. The Prophet, therefore, fought three battles to defend her before she was finally left in peace. Kaul Sur stayed around the Temple happily for some years. One day she went to the Prophet and said: "Oh Prophet, here I am unmarried and childless, when I die there will be no one to continue my name and it will be entirely forgotten." "That," said the Prophet, "is foolish talk. Tell me the name of your ancestors of a hundred years ago." After the girl thought for a few moments, she had to confess that she did not know them. Then the Prophet said: "This, I will do for you, yonder tank shall bear your name so that for generations your name will be on the lips of thousands of people." This satisfied her and she lived there until her death.

There is a tall tower, seven stories high, on the Temple grounds. It is the highest building in Amritsar. I climbed to the top and a wonderful view of the whole town lay before me. It was built in honor of the son of a prophet. He was playing with some children one day when another little boy became sick and went home and died. The prophet's son, when he heard this, went to the boy's house and said to him: "Come! Take your turn in the game, then you may die afterwards." At this the boy arose and the game was resumed. When he heard about it the prophet was very angry with his son and told him that he had gone against the Will of God. At this the child of nine years became very sad and went out into the jungle, hoping that he might die because he had displeased his father. His wish was granted. The people hearing of his death built the tower in memory of him.

When I asked where Guru Nanak was buried, my guide said that at the time of the Prophet's death the Hindus and Mahommedans had a fight over his body; when they opened the cloth in which it was bound, they found only a few flowers. The Hindus took half of the cloth and burnt it; while the Mahommedans took the other half and buried it. In that way everyone was satisfied. He went on to say that Guru Nanak gave only the fundamentals of the Sikh religion and left his successors to work out the details. He taught that there is but one God and one must love Him and one's neighbor. When he died another prophet rose up in his place and this happened successively until the tenth Guru died; then all the tenets of the Sikh religion being established and explained no more prophets were necessary.

My Sikh guide seemed as interested in telling me about his religion as I was eager to hear about it. When I told him that I was a Catholic, he said: "We also baptize. Ordinarily, five sit twice a week in the temple and new converts are baptized and the big sinners re-baptized." Appar-

ently water is poured on the head and mouth, and some of it must be drunk. Then he told me that in the temple there is a charitable kitchen where people of all castes may and do come. They give out about Rs. 60/ a day and all of their workers are volunteers. High caste men and women come and make chappaties on an enormous iron plate and peel vegetables and do all the other work which has to be done in a kitchen. Wherever there is a Sikh temple, he said, there is a free kitchen. They also have free lodgings for pilgrims who come from afar. These pilgrimages last from five to seven days, as a rule; if anyone wishes to stay longer, his case is investigated. All castes and creeds stay under one roof! That was what astonished me. I had not seen anything like it anywhere else in India,—caste people eating with out-castes, and Hindus eating with Mahommedans, and all of this long before Gandhi began fasting to break down the caste system.

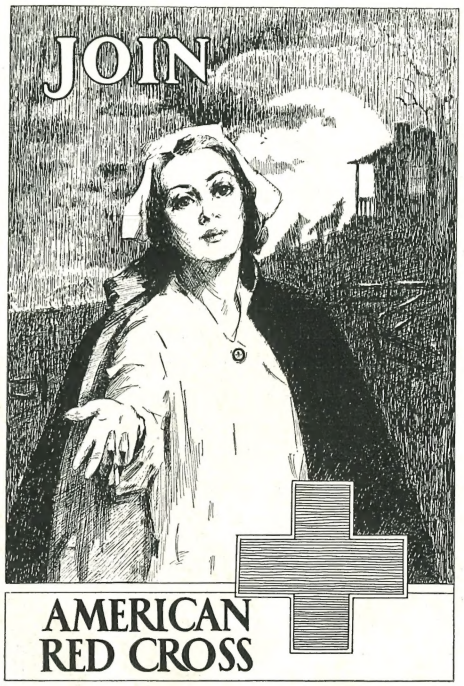
In or near the temple, the Sikh said, there was a boys' school and a girls' school as well as a hospital and dispensary. In the latter places they treat up to a hundred and fifty out-patients a day. The hospital is the least flourishing of all the temple enterprises as they seem to have no nurses and very little equipment. He said that it was the only hospital in the heart of Amritsar, although there are others, very good ones (but not Catholic) on the outskirts.

Today, the Sikhs are governed by 150 of their number, elected by votes from the whole of the Punjab, who every so often sit in session in another temple near the Golden Temple. Whatever their decisions may be, they must be obeyed by all of the other Sikhs. The decrees of this Council are so revered that if it gave an edict to commit the most atrocious crimes, the Sikh community would obey.

There are four laws for the violation of which a Sikh must be re-baptized. They are: not to shave, not to smoke, not to divorce, and to give in charity. A Sikh must always carry a knife with him for self-protection and to remind him that he must not call on others for help all of the time. In the days when there was much fighting in India, this was a necessary asset.

It is not at all easy for a Sikh, really and truly to live up to his religion. When I said this to my guide, he said: "A Sikh must walk as on the edge of a dagger. Although he must get married and work and mingle with the world, he must live as a lotus flower on the water."

I had seen all there was to be seen so I thanked my guide and departed. As I went I kept pondering over his last words: "He must live as a lotus flower on the water." How near that is to our ideal of how a religious should live, I thought, but how difficult it must be to approach such an ideal without the Sacraments and all that our Faith gives us.



ANNUAL RED CROSS ROLL CALL, NOV. 11TH TO 30TH

TOWERS OF SILENCE

(*Continued from page 2*)

in their construction, the hardest and best materials being used in order that they may not only last for centuries, but that no living being may be contaminated nor the earth polluted. They are round massive structures built throughout of solid stone. A few steps from the ground of each is an iron gate which opens on to a circular platform with a circular well in the center. This platform is about three hundred feet in circumference, is paved with large stone slabs well cemented and divided into three rows of receptacles. The first row is for the male corpses; the second, for female; and a small row for children. Between these rows are foot paths for the corpse bearers. The central well in the tower, which is one hundred and fifty feet in circumference, is used for the disposal of the bones. After they have been dried by the powerful heat of the tropical sun, they are thrown into it. In the inner side of the well there are holes through which the rain water is carried into four underground drains at the base of the tower. These drains are connected with four underground wells, the bottoms of which are covered with a thick layer of sand and pieces of charcoal and sand stone. This is renewed from time to time. These double sets of filters are provided for purifying the rain water which passes over the bones, before it enters the ground, so that "Mother Earth shall not be defiled."

This is just one of the many strange customs of the Parsees. They are quite distinct from those of the Hindus and Mohammedans. This is so because the Parsees who are the followers of Zoroaster only came to India from Persia in the beginning of the eighth century to escape Mahommedan prosecution.

Promote Medical Missions by subscribing to "The Medical Missionary." Subscription, $1 a year. Address, "The Medical Missionary," Brookland, Washington, D. C.